



Changing of the Color Guard in Firefighting Tactics

Thermo-Gel Colorant Operations/Evaluation

As of August 7, 2008, Thermo-Gel will be available at the Tooele SEAT Base, managed by the Salt Lake Field Office Fire and Aviation program. In a cooperative effort between the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the Forest Service, we are pursuing evaluating color additives to water enhancer products (gel type fire suppressants). The color additives are primarily for aerial applications from single engine air tanker (SEAT). The water enhancer product in use is Thermo-Gel 200L (red pail) and is a FS approved product currently on the QPL without the color additive. This product also has a conditional approval for use with a color additive in conjunction with this evaluation.

The actual colors of the additives being evaluated are blue, orange, and/or possibly red. Any of these color packages are acceptable in this evaluation. The evaluation is being conducted to determine, (1) if the color is visible in the local fuel types as seen from the air and (2) if there is adequate difference in the colors to distinguish these products from long-term retardants. **Water enhancers serve as a suppressant and are to be used tactically for direct attack actions.** The addition of a colorant provides better visibility for both aerial and ground resources.

The Tooele SEAT base is one of four nation locations to be test sites for the color additives. The BLM has selected four SEAT base locations to be test sites for color additives: Miles City, MT; Mountain Home, ID; Wells, NV; and Tooele, UT. The BIA has selected five SEAT operations to be test sites for these color additives: White River, AZ (R3); Double Eagle, NM (R3); Pine Ridge, SD (R2); Ronan, MT (R1), and Omak, WA (R6).

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine which colorant package- best meets the visibility requirements for aerial application of ThermoGel 200L. The US Department of Interior (BIA/BLM) and US Forest Service have requested this evaluation in an effort to define a color package that will provide acceptable visibility in a range of wildland fuels. When completed, a review and interpretation of the collected data - will be performed and a final recommendation on the acceptability of any of the color packages will be made to the Fire Chemicals Board. The Field Operations Evaluations plan will be approved by the U.S. Forest Service, Wildland Fire Chemical Systems (WFCS) Program Leader.

Goals

Validate the visibility of the color packages in a variety of wildland fuel types.
Make a color package use recommendation to the Fire Chemicals Board.

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